

How to Keep Students Engaged

How to Keep Students **ENGAGED:**

What's Killing Engagement
and How to Get Them Back



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Strategies and Tips from Teacher
and Student Perspectives

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How to Keep Students Engaged: What's Killing Engagement and How to Get Them Back

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How do you get and keep your students' engaged?

We've gathered expert advice from teachers, students, instructional designers, and within AES to provide you with some best practices, tips and strategies to get your students engaged and re-engaged. We hope you find it useful and would love to hear what you think or what you would add. Let's continue the conversation on [Facebook](#).

part one.

What's Not Working

1. What's Killing Student Engagement

Your biggest challenge—the ability to catch and hold the attention of today's learners, which may be the achievement most elusive and most coveted by you, the teacher.

First, more distractions than ever before (smart phones, texting, social networks, etc.) mean students have shorter attention spans. A traditional lecture-based classroom will no longer capture students' attention and keep them mentally active in the classroom.

Next, these “digital natives” require interactive learning rather than passive learning. They expect immediate response and instant assessment. They are bored by traditional textbooks and lectures. From a young age, today's students are constantly entertained by video games, TV, movies, and everything and anything on the internet. To expect them to sit in a classroom and learn with no “entertainment” is almost unrealistic.

Additionally, students' motivation needs a boost. The promise of employment after education looks grimmer than in the past. This leaves you, as educators, with the need to find ways to revitalize students' interest and passion in their education. And students now more than ever need to actively participate in and take responsibility for their learning success.

How do you get and keep your students' engaged?

2. How Can I Force Students To Spend More Time Learning?

Written by [Dick Carlson](#)

A client recently relayed a comment to me from a classroom teacher. The teacher was disappointed in our e-learning unit because some students would just quickly “click through” the content, rather than spending several minutes on each screen. The instructor wanted to know if we could modify the product to force the students to spend a couple of minutes looking at each screen, before they were allowed to click “next” and proceed. My client asked how I would respond to the question.

Here’s what I said — I’m curious, how would YOU respond?

Would Forcing Longer Time On A Screen Help?

I usually start this answer (if I think the teacher can take a little gentle ribbing) by asking if, before they hand out the textbooks, they glue down the corners of all the pages. When they say “no” I let this lead into having the group list the uses of a textbook – not just a front-to-back read, but for reference, to use for review before testing, to quote in projects, to refresh memory during open-book tests, and so forth.

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From there, I start talking about how e-learning content can be used in many different ways by a learner. Some learners will start at the beginning, and go from front to back. Some will dip their toes in at different places. Some will scan for subjects of interest. Some will use the “search” function to find a specific subject. (I stop to point out that, as educators, we don’t get a vote in this. It’s how learners build knowledge in the world today.) So we need to understand that, and build it into our understanding of how we help them facilitate their learning.

What Has Changed In Learning, Anyway?

Back when I was in the 3rd grade, Mrs. Solem had a huge amount of control over what I learned and exactly how that happened. Today, learners expect to be able to make a lot of decisions about what and how they’re going to learn. (They make GOOD and BAD decisions, of course. That’s to be expected.) Our job as teachers and facilitators is to help guide them as they do this, to show them how to make good choices, and (ultimately) measure the outcome of their choices and achievement. The learners own their success or failure.

Technically, it’s easy to set a minimum screen time. Practically, we’ve found that learners just go browse the web or read email or paint their nails or do something else. I’ve seen no solid research that there’s a corresponding increase in learning. Much like gluing the pages down in a textbook to force students to spend more time on each one, you’re just going to frustrate the participant.

The larger question that needs to be asked here is why does the learner skip through the content, not learn, and end up with “some quiz and test scores so low”?

Given Good Content And Teaching, Why Don’t They Learn?

If we assume the content is good quality, and the teaching is good quality – why do students skip through it and fail the tests? There are enough

answers there to fill a thesis dissertation, but I'll focus here on just one. Motivation.

If we're trying to teach a student how to write an MLA footnote, and the student sees no reason that they need to learn to do so – I could make them stay on that page for an hour and they probably won't learn the content. (Unless I tell them there's a test they have to pass to graduate.) Google the [difference between “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivation](#) for extra credit.

But if I tell the student the next screen will show them how to double their score at “Angry Birds” they will stay on that screen until they've squeezed every drop of knowledge out of it. Because they want that information for themselves and see the value.

So as a teacher, one of the most useful things you could possibly do is to show your students that what you're teaching is connected to their real lives, and actually means something to them. And that's a huge, huge job.

So — what do you think? Do you glue your virtual pages down?

*Dick Carlson is an **Instructional Designer**, author, speaker and project manager who develops amazing learning experiences for technical audiences. He writes a blog called “[TechHerding](#)” that started when he began herding technical cats at the Microsoft Corporation over seven years ago.*

3. Keeping Students Engaged: A Student's Perspective

Some input from a student, Bri Richard.

Have you ever had a student fall asleep in class? Though I've never fallen asleep in class, I will admit some classes make me wish I would have stayed in my room and napped the afternoon away... Keeping students engaged for longer than a roller coaster ride is a tricky thing, I know. What could those teachers have done to avoid nappers in the classroom?

Today I will share some opinions from myself and fellow students on keeping students engaged and interested during class time.

Don't Just Lecture!

A lecture is the worst way to convey information to most students. It gets repetitive and boring, especially if there are no visuals to go along with the topic. Lecture alone has no hope of keeping students engaged.

How to get away from it:

- Try asking the students questions during the lecture to keep them alert, while also creating better student-teacher interaction. (Knowing names helps a lot in this situation!)

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- Spend a few classes having discussions on the topic. Ask for questions and ideas to spark new thoughts and understanding.

Keeping It Relevant=Keeping Students Engaged

If a student learns a concept, but doesn't know how it relates to anything else they are learning, it's hard to remember, let alone care about!

How to stay relevant:

- Tell the students why they need to know it.
- Work with other teachers and cover the same time period in the same week so students can make connections. (Works great with History and Literature!)

Get Creative!

Putting some personality into a lecture is better than listening to a drone, trust me. Also, any different way to introduce new topics or have students do work is great.

How to spruce it up:

- **Humor.** Students like a teacher who isn't afraid to get a little silly. You could be the teacher they look forward to seeing! Humor is a fantastic, simple way of keeping students engaged.
- Use **social media and pop culture** references to keep the interest up. If you read something about Lady Ga Ga in the paper that morning, find a way to relate her to the topic that day.
- **Technology** is your friend! Powerpoint presentations, Youtube videos, music, anything you can think of can be used as a tool to present your information in a new, exciting way. (You could even have a class discussion on Facebook)

The biggest thing to remember is that your students are there to learn. Keeping students engaged in the content and interested in listening is the best way to help them reach that goal. For some other tips on keeping students engaged, view some of our other [posts](#).

Bri Richard, is a Senior English major at Millersville University. Currently she is an intern at Applied Educational Systems, mainly working with the Development Department.

How to resolve six common challenges you face as a teacher.

part two.

Strategies for Keeping Students Engaged

4. Foster Student Responsibility

Are you looking for ways to encourage students' ownership of their learning? Here are some ideas to foster student responsibility.

Incorporate Online Learning

Online curriculum is a remarkable tool for getting students to take responsibility for their learning. Most online curriculum by its anytime/anywhere nature supports student independence in learning. Students can learn on their laptops and tablets at the park, at a friend's house, or at 3am in their own room. They get to decide when and where they'll focus on their learning. They may make some bad choices, but come quiz and test time, they'll soon learn to make better decisions about their work habits.

Assign Lesson Plans to Students

Another way to get students to take ownership of their learning is to hand over the reigns. Give each student or small groups of students the responsibility to teach particular areas of curriculum to the rest of the class. These lessons tend to become informal and hopefully generate lots of questions and discussion.

Include Guest Speakers

Field trips are great, but can be a logistical difficulty. Instead, bring the field trip to your classroom. Have a guest cover the content of your lesson plans. Dig into your smart phone contacts for some friends, family, and professional associates. If possible, have the class take place somewhere on campus more casual than your classroom, like a lounge or cafe or outside. The change in atmosphere may help students feel more in their element.

Keep in mind that while encouraging students to take more responsibility for their learning, the other side of that is that you as an instructor may have to give up some control. Try to view it as a shift in responsibility. So, in order for them to take some on, you have to give it over to them.

5. Invite Guests

Get creative about your resources! With the vast amount of content to cover in a course, are you trying to be everything to everyone?

Engage students with creative resources

You can't be a subject matter expert in everything. Take a page from the New York City Schools and consider implementing a mentorship program. With the help of [Citizen Schools](#), they started an enrichment [program that provides business mentors to middle school students](#). The program matches up students with volunteer business mentors who help the students to budget and market a fictional business. At the end of the 10-week period, the students present their work to their mentors and teachers. The program has been proven in other cities to increase attendance and achievement.

Invite guest speakers to present to your class

Perhaps including guests such as local business volunteers or visitors into your lesson plans can help stretch your content coverage and get your students interested and engaged in their learning. Your students would

likely enjoy a new voice or face, and the opportunity to learn from a variety of people, not just you. (Don't take it personally!)

How to Find Guests

- Local business owners might like to come in and share a specific experience or aspect of their business.
- Check with your students. What do their parents and networks do? They might have someone perfect for your next class on personal finance.
- Work with your local chamber of commerce. They might be willing to include a mention in their upcoming e-newsletter.
- And of course, your own networks. Who's on Facebook talking about their latest achievement? Ask them in to talk about it to the class.

How it Would Work

You can make it as simple or as elaborate as you desire.

- Have your volunteers come in for a class period or two.
- Business volunteers can do more than talk about THEIR business and what they do. Assign your volunteers a topic, such as GNP, and allow them to cover that content.
- Perhaps having on-site visitors is too complicated or too much of an imposition on your volunteers. Why not have them "visit" your classroom via [Google+](#), [Skype](#), or [Ovoo](#)? All you and your volunteers need is a Web cam and a (free) account.
- Before the guest arrives, make sure your students understand this is material for which they will be responsible.

Being a teacher doesn't mean you have to be a subject matter expert in all areas of content. It means you know how to lead, engage and take advantage of creative resources.

Take advantage of the resources that are all around you—your local business people.

6. Use Media

Have you ever picked up a book in a bookstore or library just because there was an interesting photo or illustration on the cover? No matter how hard you try, it can be difficult not to “judge a book by its cover.” In these cases, the visuals probably sparked your interest in the story before you even flipped the book over to read more. The cover serves as a “hook” to get you interested in the book’s contents. Let’s be honest—your lesson plans aren’t always the most engaging for students.

So how can you use media to keep students engaged in *your* story and improve their learning outcomes?

Get your student’s attention

Remember the book cover—“hook” your students into your lesson plans by creating a motivating real-world context for your lesson. Next, add images or photographs to reinforce the narrative. The scenarios let the students know why they should be interested, and the visuals add more engagement. One of my favorite tidbits about supporting media is that it’s most effective at improving learning outcomes for students who are new to a topic (just like computer applications lesson plans!).

Decrease cognitive load

Cognitive load theory suggests that information is processed through two channels: an auditory channel and a visual channel. Each channel is limited to the amount of information that it can process at one time. You can use media to decrease cognitive load by off-loading some of the essential processing from the auditory channel to the visual channel.

Let's look at an example from Spreadsheet Basics: Basic Formulas and Functions:

In this assignment, our context makes the student the owner of The Trusty Cup Café who needs to set up a spreadsheet, using formulas, to manage inventory. Through verbal storytelling, we tell them about how their business is growing, what inventory is, and why it is important. We present the remainder of the details about the Café to the students visually, including what the store looks like and the types of items they are selling. Most importantly, off-loading some of the story (that important “hook”) to the visual channel leaves cognitive processing available for focusing on the specific tasks of the project!

Further reading on the importance of media and engagement

Want more information about including media in your Computer Applications Lesson Plans? Check out [The Importance of Using Media in Your Computer Applications Lesson Plans](#) and learn how to make your content more memorable.

7. Embrace Online Learning

From talking to teachers like you, we know that perhaps your greatest challenge in today's classrooms is capturing and keeping students' interest.

Using online learning tools in a blended environment is one way to combat your learners' elusive attention. By nature of being delivered electronically, online courses are able to capture and keep students' interest with truly interactive, multimedia content.

Beyond that, online courses typically demand a greater investment from students by handing them the reins of responsibility for their learning success. Providing online software to students allows them to take control and master the ever-important skill of time management. The flexibility of choosing when and where to do their learning empowers students.

Students discover the correlation between their own input of time and effort and their knowledge and preparedness for scoring well on quizzes, tests, exams and skills assessment.

8. Rewards, Empathy, and Excitement...Oh My!

Before the holidays, I, like many students, tend to lack motivation. If we, as grown adults, have trouble concentrating, we should certainly understand that our students do too. So how can we engage students?

Rewards

There is a lot of debate over offering students rewards. If you are someone who isn't opposed to this idea, think about offering your class weekly rewards. You need to cover a certain amount of material each week. To help keep the students focused, make a deal that as long as you get through everything you have planned for the week, the students can use the last 10 minutes of class on Fridays as free time. Keep your goals realistic and show the students exactly what you need to accomplish for the week. My guess is you won't miss much educational time during those 10 minutes. With the distraction of the weekend and the upcoming break, many students will have already tuned out of your class as it is. As an added bonus you have built-in "free time" that struggling students may use as an opportunity for additional help from you.

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

Next, remember what it is like to be in their shoes. I remember having teachers that insisted on using every available second to cram in as much information as possible – I dreaded those classes. Now, having been on the other side of that coin, I understand that teachers have a very limited amount of time with their students and need to make the most of what they have. Part of being a teacher involves recognizing there will be both good and bad days for learning. On those good days, take full advantage of your students' willingness to learn – this may mean you cover more material than you originally planned. On the bad days, recognize that forcing information on students who are unwilling to learn is futile. A student must be an active participant in learning. On these days, cover the basics but don't go too in-depth.

Exciting Lessons

Finally, as we mentioned in Monday's blog, make sure your lessons are something your students will want to pay attention to. Now is the time of year when you should put away your days of lecture-based learning and pull out some fun activities that revolve around the topics you need to cover. Sometimes teachers fall into the trap that if students are having fun, they must not be learning. I believe that is probably the furthest thing from the truth. If students are having fun on a project/activity directly related to the topic you need to cover, they will most likely retain the information better than if they were a non-active participant in a lecture. When is a better time of year to allow your students to have fun then right before a break?

How do you keep your students engaged during the most distracting times of year?

9. Variety, the Spice of Life

Keeping students engaged in any class can be a challenge—there is such diversity among each group of students! How do you meet all of their needs? Variety is the key. (They don’t call it the “spice of life” for nothing) Here are some instructional strategies we use in our computer applications and introduction to business lesson plans to support your learners as they construct knowledge:

The “Hook”

Also called the *anticipatory set*, this is where you get the student’s attention—which you need before any learning can take place. A great way to draw students in is to share a story. And while generating interest is certainly one benefit, using stories also has additional value. They can provide a context for the learning that’s about to take place and help students relate new information to something they already know.

Multimedia Delivery of Information

Once you have their attention, the next challenge is keeping students engaged, especially during direct instruction. Presenting information through

multimedia is an effective strategy to overcome this obstacle. Again, it's about more than just looking pretty. The “multi” part means that more senses are being engaged as students get information through both visual and verbal channels. When you combine images and words in a meaningful way, it fosters deeper learning. See our related post on the [importance of media in student engagement](#).

Guided Practice

Once students “get” information, they need to do something with it in order to make it “stick.” And it's also good to make sure that they understood it correctly early on. Questions and interactive exercises embedded throughout the computer applications and introduction to business lessons support active learning. They typically focus on asking students to apply knowledge through examples and answer “why.” They also provide automatic feedback individually to each student—it's almost like having your own private tutor!

Independent Practice

Assignments give students a chance to “put it all together” in a real-world context. For example, students may take on the role of a small business owner and practice their word processing and writing skills by creating a memo for their “staff.” Assignments extend the active learning process, but with less guidance. Sample answers are provided, and feedback can come from self, peer, or teacher review.

We are always thinking about keeping students engaged when designing any lesson, including creating computer applications and introduction to business lesson plans. Not only does it promote better learning for the student, it also helps you with your work as a teacher—a WIN, WIN!

10. 5 Student Engagement Tips: If You Have Just a Second

How are you keeping students engaged?

Have you ever thought: “My students don’t want to be educated, they want to be entertained!”? It’s all about keeping students engaged!

Keeping students engaged in class can be a real challenge for teachers. And students who are bored or distracted can be a disruption to other students as well.

You don’t have to learn to “sing and dance” to engage students in your health science education classes (though it might be fun!). Instead, try integrating blended learning tools like those included with HealthCenter21 to keep your students interested, motivated, and engaged.

Here are 5 ways to help engage students in your health science program:

Keeping Students Engaged: Student-Directed Learning

If your students are bored in class, it doesn't necessarily mean that you are boring! Students have different learning styles, and they often learn at different paces. Traditional lectures and "lock-step" activities may be too fast for some students and too slow for others.

Try mixing in activities and assignments that students can complete at their own pace, such as the [HealthCenter21 online](#) learning lessons. Assignments can still have "due dates." But allowing students to control when and how they work on those assignments will help to make sure you are not boring your faster students or leaving your slower students in the dust!

Keeping Students Engaged: Interactive Exercises

Computers and mobile devices are quickly replacing newspapers, magazines and even television as our primary sources for news and information. And the main reason is "interactivity." Just as we prefer to interact with our information sources, students also want to interact with the instructional materials you provide.

Are there ways that you can transform some of your passive reading or listening lessons? For example, interactive exercises such as HealthCenter21's "drag-and-drop" activities" engage students in simple vocabulary lessons by drawing them in as active participants, and providing them with immediate feedback.

Keeping Students Engaged: Multimedia Content

When large blocks of information must be learned in a short amount of time, "reading assignments" may seem like the only alternative. But some students have reading difficulties, and others simply refuse to read.

To keep students motivated and engaged with these types of assignments you could try reading *to* them... (better get out your tap shoes!). Or you could provide them with *multimedia content* such as the online content

in HealthCenter21. Through photos, animation, and video, students receive information in a way that is visually interesting. And narrated text ensures that all students can *hear* as well as see the written words.

Keeping Students Engaged: Hands-On Activities and Group Projects

Although multimedia content and interactive activities can be very engaging, students can get too much of a good thing. (My own kids even take occasional breaks from Facebook and Angry Birds!) So to *keep* students engaged it's important to mix it up.

In health science education, there are lots of opportunities for students to move around the classroom, work with their hands, and to interact with other students. That's why HealthCenter21 lesson plans include hands-on activities such as medical skills and procedures practice, as well as small group projects, experiments and role-playing scenarios.

Keeping Students Engaged: Teacher-Led Presentations and Discussions

Sometimes teachers just have to teach. In fact, standing in front of your students and sharing your healthcare knowledge and experience with them is often the most valuable blended learning tool of all. And just because it may be called a "lecture" doesn't automatically make it boring!

Many teachers are now comfortable using Microsoft's *PowerPoint* software with their lectures. And HealthCenter21's ready-made PowerPoint presentations can enhance those lectures further with visually appealing graphics and photographs, as well as discussion questions that help transform a one-way talk into a two-way conversation. Now that's engaging!

11. Re-Engaging Students: 10 Simple Strategies

As teachers, we have all experienced moments where we have been sure we sounded like the teachers from *Peanuts* cartoons. The lecture you were delivering about CPR or Microsoft Word has left your lips in English, and by the time it reaches your students' ears has translated into, "Wonk, wonk, wonk."

Similarly, I'm sure you've all sat through classes where no matter how hard you tried to focus on what the teacher was saying, you were distracted by something going on outside of the window, the hype surrounding the royal wedding, or just your lack of sleep the night before.

My favorite teacher was my eleventh grade math teacher. This teacher knew his subject, he knew his students, he was up on the latest research, but most importantly, he *engaged* his students. As a frequent day-dreamer, I can honestly say I never lost focus in that class. My teacher kept me engaged and interested.

Engaging – or if need be, re-engaging students is something all teacher's struggle with at some point in their careers. Andrew Marcinek's blog, [*Ten Simple Strategies for Re-engaging Students*](#). His steps include:

1. Have fun

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2. Learn beyond the walls
3. Expand your audience
4. Collaborate
5. Deconstruct an issue transparently
6. Make many mistakes along the way
7. Share
8. Provide Constructive Criticism
9. Eat a sandwich
10. Engage Others

12. Two Articles Every Health Science Teacher Should Read

There are times when as I scour resources for blog ideas, I come across an article that hits on exactly what I'm thinking. That happened to me twice today. Here are two articles every health science teacher should read today. I don't want you to miss out on these articles. You really need to read these for yourself. Please do. And enjoy!

[“Common Misconceptions of Educators Who Fear EdTech”](#)

This article gives great arguments against the most common objections to using technology in the classroom, including:

- Time
- Cost
- Assessment
- Control (I think this is the one that I hear the most from our instructors)
- Lack of Training

“Teaching as Leadership: Demystifying the ‘Natural Born’ Teacher”

I particularly liked this statement, “what these **teachers** do *not* use is a **pedagogical** formula or a “**teach to the top**” philosophy. They make sure that students—*all* of them— comprehend the material.” This article resonated with me because I know that there are a number of instructors using our program that are not educators by, well, education. Many of them are from the nursing field or have a business background. Teaching has been a career change for them. This one’s for you guys!

For Business & Computer Applications educators: “Closing the gap between what is and what students need for the workplace.”

For Health Science educators: “Online engages and challenges a diverse body of students.”

part three.

Inspirational Teachers Keeping Students Engaged

13. How One School Provides Effective, Affordable eLearning for Health Science Content

Challenge

The Health Technologies program at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School nearly tripled in enrollment two years ago. Although thrilled to have more students in the program, Kathy Regan, along with the other instructors, needed to find an economical and effective way to provide the content for the larger class sizes. And the content needed to be able to reach learners with varying strengths and weaknesses. Regan found that elearning for health science was worth investigating.

Solution

At about the same time, Regan was made aware of the online program that not only provided content, but also provided a means of gauging student understanding with online quizzes and tests. Regan liked this idea as they already had more than enough computers to get started with the program.

Results

Regan is happy with how HealthCenter21 has helped her comply with her administration's desire for instructors to see immediate assessment. The quizzes and tests are scored automatically at the time the students complete them. When she sees that a student has performed poorly on a quiz, she can intercede and help that student get back on track before it is time for the module test. "HealthCenter21 helps meet those standards that [administrators] want for us as educators," says Regan.

Is eLearning for Health Science right for you?

[Read Kathy's story about her discovery, implementation, and success with eLearning for health science.](#)

14. Why is Rita Griffith so Successful with Elearning for Health Science?

Rita Griffith, who teaches the Medical Assistant course at Chesterfield Technical Center, runs a very successful course that incorporates elearning for health science.

Rita Griffith, RN, Chesterfield Technical Center

What is her elearning for health science tool? “We absolutely love HealthCenter21!” says Griffith.

Griffith typically works one-on-one with individual students practicing skills while other students learn with HealthCenter21. “We use it every day in my class. I am so glad our school purchased the curriculum, it makes teaching essential skills so much easier, plus the students enjoy the visual aspects of the program.”

“HealthCenter21 is an excellent teaching tool in that students can be self-directed learners by working at their own pace, allowing for more individual instruction time and demonstration for hands-on skills with the instructor. Students can take notes while working through each unit and have immediate access to their results on unit quizzes, which helps them stay current with their grades.

Griffith explains that the HealthCenter21 curriculum is very effective in aiding students to become self-directed learners and gives them the confidence they need to be successful in the clinical setting. “Students are taking the skills learned in the classroom and applying them directly to patient care,” Griffith says. “Grading is much more manageable with HealthCenter21; there is less time spent on grading papers. I have more time to complete other valuable projects needed to keep my class up-to-date on the ever-changing world of healthcare! Students love it. I love it! It is a valuable part of my curriculum. Now that I have HealthCenter21, how did I manage without it?!?”

Click [here](#) for the full version of Rita Griffith’s Case Study.

15. Computer Applications Lesson Plans: Keeping Content Relevant

Finding relevant computer applications lesson plans can be quite a challenge. Lynn Huggins, a teacher at Merrill F. West High School in Tracy, CA, is a veteran teacher of career pathways. Huggins uses Business&ITCenter²¹ to bridge the disconnect between what students learn and what they need for their futures.

The Struggle to Find Relevant Computer Applications Lesson Plans

Huggins has always struggled with the lag between the available curriculum for her computer applications lesson plans and the knowledge needed in her students' immediate futures. She had concerns about their preparedness for the ever-changing skills required to move ahead.

The Solution

In her search for relevant computer applications lesson plans, Huggins found Business&ITCenter21. “Business&ITCenter21 is the first bold step towards bridging the big disconnect, the lag between what we are teaching and what students need to know to be successful in the workplace,” says Lynn Huggins.

She explains how the program is “a different way of teaching the same information for

Computer Literacy, Computer Applications, and Entrepreneurship.” And sets them up “to have a viable career and also have the skills when they get to the employer, the skill sets they need for employability,” Huggins adds.

The Results

“Ten years I’ve been waiting for this,” Huggins explains, “the way the program teaches the different kinds of elements of what someone who will work in IT will need, such as hardware, software, accounting, management... it is all integrated in these online computer applications lesson plans. So you’ll get some marketing, some computer applications—a comprehensive education. But you will have the skills to hold down a job and have the skills that industry is telling us you absolutely have to have or they have to choose someone else.”

For more information about Lynn Huggins’ success with Business&ITCenter21, read the [case study](#).

Download your **Free** copy of [6 Common Challenges in YOUR classroom](#) now and start reading in 60 seconds!

part four.

It Can't Be Just You

16. The Student Engagement Dilemma: Fireworks in Your Classroom?

The student engagement dilemma...many are facing it. Are you?

So, teaching students about how to use spreadsheets or how to take a patient's temperature isn't exactly like fireworks, right? Your lectures don't make students "ooh" and "ahh"?

Could they? Wait, *should* they?

I may be in the minority, but I get a little frustrated reading article after article about how to entertain and keep students engaged. Wait, I *write* some of those articles! I certainly understand the importance of student engagement. And I applaud all the efforts of others like myself as we try to provide solutions to what we've heard is your biggest challenge. I just don't think the burden of student engagement should entirely rest on the shoulders of educators. So, while all those articles are relevant and certainly worthwhile, I want to take a step back for a minute and get something off my chest.

On the Soapbox

School was pretty darn boring when I was a student. However, I still managed to stay engaged and did very well in school. No offense to all those teachers, but my engagement and investment in their classrooms was more about *me* and less about *them*. I distinctly recall my parents telling me on several occasions, “You are not at school to be entertained; you’re there to learn. That’s your job. Do it well.”

Teachers can only do so much and bring so much to the table to get students engaged in their learning. Now this is not a get-out-of-jail-free card for teachers either. Teachers must move with trends in education and learning. They must embrace technology, mobile learning, project-based learning, the flipped classroom, etc. . .

But the rest of us, administrators, parents, and students, need to acknowledge that teachers are not *solely* responsible for student engagement. Students are responsible for keeping themselves engaged. They must be encouraged to do so. Motivated to do so. In the home and from within themselves.

From the Mouths of Babes

Lo, and behold, when I opened up my email this morning, SmartBrief’s Accomplished Teacher had an article titled “[Are Today’s Students Motivated to Learn?](#)” From the mouths of babes. Please watch this 60 second video. Student, 17-year-old Joseph A. Ryan, Jr believes that the biggest problem with our schools is students’ unwillingness to learn. I remember those kids that didn’t have any willingness to learn. Although years ago, I think they were fewer of them. They annoyed me beyond belief. I really couldn’t relate to those who didn’t want to do well, didn’t want to perform, didn’t want to set themselves up for a bright future. Why are there so many of them now? What has caused this disinterest in equipping yourself for a life as good or better than your parents?

Student Engagement Solution?

Well, we are soon going to release an eBook on Keeping Students Engaged. I stand behind these suggestions and recommendations for keeping students engaged. However, we serve them up with a word of caution. If students don't cross your threshold with a willingness to learn that comes from the home and from within themselves, you could set off fireworks in your classroom and still not be able to engage them.

Don't Be Discouraged

Okay, my apologies for that big dose of negativity. But please don't be discouraged. You have the opportunity to help change lives and impact our future workforce. Do your part to keep up with techniques and recommendations for student engagement that you can implement in your classroom. For those students that arrive with a willingness to learn, you'll be certain to get and keep them engaged. They need you! And cut yourself a bit of a break with those students that don't yet realize how much they need you.

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Figure 16.1.